

Thomas-Jensen Affirmation

Exhibit # 50

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND**

STATE OF NEW YORK; et al., Plaintiffs, v. DONALD TRUMP, in his official capacity as President of the United States; et al., Defendants.	C.A. No. 1:25-cv-00039-JJM-PAS
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DECLARATION OF VASSILIS L. SYRMOS

I, Vassilis L. Syrmos, declare as follows:

1. I am a resident of the State of Hawai‘i. I am over the age of 18 and have personal knowledge of all the facts stated herein, except to those matters stated upon information and belief; as to those matters, I believe them to be true. If called as a witness, I could and would testify competently to the matters set forth below.

2. I am currently employed by the University of Hawai‘i (UH) as the Vice President for Research and Innovation.

3. The University of Hawai‘i is the only public higher education institution in the State of Hawai‘i.

4. My office (the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation) tracks federal funding received by the University of Hawai‘i through grant awards, cooperative agreements, contracts and other agreements.

5. In UH fiscal year 2024, approximately \$428 million was expended in direct and passthrough federal awards, excluding student financial aid. As of December 31, 2024, the UH

expended approximately \$238 million and we anticipate that approximately \$460 million in federal funds will be expended for UH fiscal year 2025.

6. As an island community, Hawai'i faces many challenges resulting from factors such as rising sea level, reliance on food imports, and digital threats, which are exacerbated by its geographic isolation. These challenges, along with our critical role for national security, are global opportunities as well. Hawai'i is not alone in its need and desire to preserve natural resources for future generations, and the UH has potential to develop solutions for these problems by weaving cutting-edge research and innovation with indigenous knowledge that it can share with the world.

7. The UH's research programs are focused on seven hubs that provide opportunities to address these challenges and diversify our economy: Climate Resilience, Energy and Sustainable Ecosystems; Ocean, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences; Astronomy and Space Sciences; Data Sciences and Global Cybersecurity; Health and Wellness; and Food Security and Agriculture; and the Asia-Pacific and Hawai'i.

8. The UH's educational and community outreach programs focus not only on helping to improve community health, educational attainment and job opportunities, but also developing Hawai'i's workforce to compete in the 21st century and to provide the intellectual capital needed to support workforce needs that emerge under the seven hubs.

9. Federal funding, which can leverage state and other funding, is vital to sustain and advance these initiatives and increase Hawai'i's contributions to the nation's economy and strategic interests. The UH's budget for this fiscal year is dependent upon federal funds to make average payroll and fringe of \$10 million per month and \$11 million per month for project employees hired through its Research Corporation of the University of Hawai'i (RCUH). This

affects over 6,000 UH employees based on average headcount, and 1,950 RCUH project staff. Personnel projections for the remaining fiscal year on federal funds total approximately \$92.4 million.

10. Any pause in our federal funding would trigger cost containment measures that, if enacted for a prolonged period, would make it difficult for the UH to continue and likely setback its sponsored research and training efforts. The UH has limited resources to cover payroll. Once funds are depleted, the UH will need to implement furlough and layoff procedures. In fiscal crises, this starts with temporary personnel such as casual employees and students, who are generally the most vulnerable financially. Some students may find it financially infeasible to continue their education due to their reduced income and may not return. In addition, the UH will need to start canceling subawards, procurements and other contracts, spreading financial hardship to its colleagues and vendors.

11. The UH also relies on subrecipients to conduct part of the scope of work under federal awards and issue approximately \$42.3 million in subawards a year to our collaborators in Hawai'i and across the United States. As of January 31, 2025, the UH issued \$33 million in subawards and anticipate that another \$10 million will be issued by the end of the UH fiscal year. A break in service could jeopardize scientific experiments, educational activities, or community services and, in turn, performance under these federal awards.

12. On or after January 27, 2025, the UH received five blanket stop work orders from four separate federal agencies that apply to grants (unspecified) held by the UH. The UH received stop work orders on specific grants, as well, and is uncertain about the ability to continue working on the grants from these agencies, notwithstanding the temporary restraining order issued on January 31, 2025. In addition, the UH has experienced delays in receiving its

reimbursements, and in some cases, the complete inability to draw down reimbursements for some of its existing awards.

13. With this uncertainty, it will become difficult to hire or retain personnel on federal funds. Faculty or other senior personnel will need to spend additional time to train new hires and start their experiments or projects over. The added burden will cause faculty to question whether it is worth conducting federally funded projects if they can be put on hold or canceled on short notice and not for cause, leading to talent drain.

14. The underlying cause of this uncertainty is the federal funding pause, but the UH's reputation in this competitive research space will suffer negatively given that the UH will be the public face of the cuts to its personnel, its vendors and the community.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on February 5, 2025, at Honolulu, Hawai'i.



Vassilis L. Symos